

Message Text

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S E C R E T USNATO 03471

NODIS CHEROKEE

PERSONAL FOR THE SECRETARY

E.O.11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: NATO, PARM
SUBJECT: THE ERW DECISION

1. YOUR CALL THIS AFTERNOON CAME WHILE THIS MESSAGE WAS
IN PREPARATION AND WAS MOST WELCOME. ON THE BASIS OF
YOUR CALL, I HAVE ARRANGED WITH LUNS FOR A RESTRICTED
PRIVATE MEETING OF PERMREPS ON FRIDAY AFTERNOON APRIL 7.

2. PUBLIC OPINION AND PRESSURES ON NATO GOVERNMENTS, EN-
COURAGED AND ABETTED BY UNREMITTING AND INCREASINGLY BOLD
SOVIET CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE WEAPON, HAVE NOW BUILT TO
SUCH A POINT THAT, NO MATTER WHAT OUR ACTION ON ERW, THE
ISSUE IS NOT GOING TO FADE AWAY AS THOUGH THE ISSUE DID
NOT HAVE A LONG AND TORTURED HISTORY.

3. IT IS NOT TOO MUCH TO SAY THAT SINCE ABRUPT CANCELLA-
TION OF MARCH 20 NAC MEETING, WHEN THERE WAS GENERAL
FEELING OF ANTICIPATION HERE THAT AT LONG LAST NATO WAS
READY TO SHOW ITS METTLE AND ACT AFFIRMATIVELY TO TIE A
DIFFICULT WEAPONS DECISION TO PURPOSEFUL ARMS CONTROL
NEGOTIATIONS, THIS HEADQUARTERS AND THE ASSEMBLED REPS OF
NATO GOVERNMENTS HAVE BEEN IN A STATE OF SHOCK AND
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APPREHENSION. THE LETDOWN FROM THE HIGH PRE-MARCH 20
ANTICIPATION HAS BROUGHT A SERIOUS MORALE PROBLEM AND
HAS NOW BEGUN TO DEEPEN INTO ACTIVE CONCERN ON PART OF
LEADING MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL AND THE SECRETARIAT OVER
THE GENERAL WELL BEING OF THE ALLIANCE. FROM PRESS AND
OTHER REPORTS WE GET HERE, I HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE
PERMREPS ARE OUT AHEAD OF THEIR GOVERNMENTS IN THIS CONCERN.

SEVERAL PERMREPS HAVE PLEADED THAT WE MUST ACT WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY OR RUN REAL RISKS THAT EVEN MODERATE POSITIONS OF THEIR GOVERNMENTS WILL UNRAVEL. IT IS HIGH TIME WE MOVE TO CLEAR UP THE UNCERTAINTY AND WE MUST NOT LET FRIDAY MEETING SLIP.

4. UNDERLYING THEME OF OUR ALLIES' COMMENTS OVER PAST TWO WEEKS HAS BEEN THEIR PERCEPTION OF WAVERING US LEADERSHIP, A LEADERSHIP WHICH WAS SO EFFECTIVELY DISPLAYED AND GRATEFULLY RECEIVED AT THE LONDON SUMMIT. THERE IS GENERAL WORRY HERE THAT US IS SEEN IN EUROPEAN PUBLIC OPINION TO BE KNUCKLING UNDER TO SOVIET PRESSURES. COMMON COMMENT IS THAT ERW MUST BE A POWERFULLY GOOD WEAPON OR ELSE SOVIETS WOULD NOT HAVE MOUNTED SUCH A MASSIVE EFFORT TO TORPEDO IT. SEVERAL COLLEAGUES SUCH AS PORTUGUESE AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED DEEP SEATED FEARS THAT THE AFFAIR IS INCREASINGLY PLAYING INTO THE HANDS OF THEIR INTERNAL LEFTIST MOVEMENTS, FROM PORTUGAL TO NETHERLANDS AND NORWAY. WE ARE TOLD HERE THAT GERMAN CONCERN AT TOP MOST LEVEL WAS EVEN DEEPER THAN GENSCHER EXPRESSED (AS WE ARE LED TO BELIEVE) IN WASHINGTON.

5. NOW WE ALL KNOW THAT THE EUROPEANS WANT IT BOTH WAYS. THEY ARE DOWNRIGHT PROPRIETARY IN RESERVING THE RIGHT TO EXAMINE INTENTLY EVERY AMERICAN ACTION AND TO FIND A WAY TO CRITICIZE WHATEVER COURSE WE EMBARK ON. HOWEVER,

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NATO'S HISTORY IS FULL OF EXAMPLES THAT, WHEN THERE IS STRONG LEADERSHIP, THE ALLIANCE PROSPERS EVEN THOUGH, AS ON ANY TIGHT SHIP, THERE MAY BE SOME GRUMBLING. WHEN AMERICA IS INDECISIVE, THE ALLIANCE SUFFERS. THIS IS THE BURDEN OF THE LEADER.

6. WE HEAR FROM GERMAN SOURCES THAT DECISION FOR DEFERRAL OF ERW IS NOW ANTICIPATED. IF THAT IS ACCURATE, WHAT WE NEED FOR FRIDAY MEETING IS A DECISION IN POSITIVE TERMS, WHICH ALSO HOLDS SOVIETS TO ACCOUNT IN ARMS CONTROL PERSPECTIVE AS PRESIDENT DID IN HIS WARSAW PRESS CONFERENCE. A SIMPLE STATEMENT OF DEFERRAL WOULD LEAVE US OPEN TO A CONTINUATION OF THE SAME EUROPE-WIDE CAMPAIGN OF RECENT MONTHS AIMED ONLY AT WESTERN DEFENSES. FURTHER, A DECISION FOR UNILATERAL RENUNCIATION IN HOPES OF CALLING FORTH SIMILAR RESTRAINT ON PART OF SOVIETS WOULD, IN LIGHT OF SOVIET ONGOING MILITARY BUILD-UP AND EXPANSIONIST BEHAVIOR PUMP ICE WATER INTO THE VEINS OF OUR ALLIES. THEN, TOO, IT WOULD HARDLY SEEM TO SQUARE WITH GROWING ALLIANCE-WIDE PERCEPTION OF SOVIET THREAT WHICH LED TO LONDON INITIATIVES. ALTHOUGH OTHER ALLIES ARE OFTEN OVER-TIMOROUS AND SOME-TIMES LAGGARD, THEY NEVERTHELESS WANT DESPERATELY TO SEE

AMERICA SUCCEED AND ALLIANCE EFFECTIVENESS MAINTAINED.
THEY WILL RALLY BEHIND US.

7. NATO UNITY AT THE MAY SUMMIT IS OUR IMMINENT HURDLE.
BUT BEYOND WASHINGTON LIES THE CONTINUING NEED TO ENSURE
US CREDIBILITY AS THE LEADER OF THE ALLIANCE. BENNETT

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